DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 345 780 JC 920 256

AUTHOR Cohen, Arthur M.
TITLE Curriculum Study Report, June 1992.
INSTITUTION Center for the Study of Community Colleges, Los Angeles, Calif.
PUB DATE Jun 92
NOTE 28p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Advanced Courses; *College Curriculum; College Transfer Students; Community Colleges; Comparative Analysis; *Courses; Curriculum Research; *Educational Trends; Enrollment Trends; General Education; *Intellectual Disciplines; *Liberal Arts; Minority Groups; National Surveys; Remedial Instruction; Trend Analysis; Two Year Colleges
IDENTIFIERS *Transfer Rates (College)

ABSTRACT

In 1992, the Center for the Study of Community Colleges (CSCC) in California examined the liberal arts curriculum in community colleges nationwide through a random sampling of 164 community colleges. Using spring 1991 catalogs and class schedules, course sections in the liberal arts were counted and tallied according to a coding scheme developed in previous CSCC studies which divided the liberal arts curriculum into major disciplines, broad subject areas, and sub-subject areas. After coding and tallying 59,205 liberal arts classes into the appropriate sub-subject areas, a random sample of every 10th section under each broad subject area was pulled. Enrollment and average class size were calculated for these sections. Selected study findings included the following: (1) overall, the liberal arts expanded from 52% of the total curriculum in 1986 to 56% in 1991; (2) the most notable shift in the curriculum was in foreign languages, which rose from 5% to 8.5% of the entire set of liberal arts classes; (3) colleges in urban areas offered a higher percentage of remedial courses; (4) college size related to course patterns only in the provision of specialized classes; (5) while the transfer rate of a college was positively related to the percentage of liberal arts courses offered, there was no relation between the percentage of advanced courses offered and a college's transfer rate; and (6) the proportion of the curriculum devoted to the liberal arts was greater in the colleges that were above the mean in percentage of minority students enrolled. (JMC)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED345780

CURRICULUM STUDY REPORT, JUNE 1992

by

Arthur M. Cohen

Center for the Study of Community Colleges
1749 Mandeville Lane
Los Angeles, California 90049
(310) 208-6088

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

A. M. Cohen

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

JC 920256

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

CURRICULUM STUDY REPORT, JUNE 1992*

The liberal arts as a focus of study derive from the belief that human knowledge and societal cohesion are grounded in rationality. In the earliest American colleges, this doctrine gave rise to a curriculum centering on philosophy, languages, science, and rhetoric. Subsequently, the liberal arts were codified in academic disciplines in the universities and expanded as new ways of organizing knowledge came to the fore. When the community colleges were founded early in the Twentieth Century they installed the liberal arts, gradually modifying them in accordance with shifting fashions of academic organization and with attention to the capabilities and interests of their students. Despite frequent attempts to shift the curriculum toward studies more directly vocational, the liberal arts, with over half the enrollment, remain the centerpiece of community college studies.

The Center for the Study of Community Colleges (CSCC) has examined the liberal arts in community colleges nationwide in a series of studies that began with a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities in 1975. Since then the CSCC staff has studied various other subsets of the liberal arts as listed:

---

*Jan Ignash coordinated the data compilation and assisted in the analyses. Additional analyses and contributions to this report were made by William Armstrong, Chuck Brinkman, R. David Cartwright, Shannon Hirose, Melissa Mellissinos, and Barry Vanderkelen.

Date	Sponsor	No. of Colleges in Sample	Curriculums Reviewed
1975	NEH	156	Humanities
1977	NEH	178	Humanities
1978	NSF	175	Sciences, Soc. Sci.
1983	Ford	38	All liberal arts
1986	Carnegie	95	All liberal arts
1987	Ford	109	Fine and Performing Arts
1991	NCAAT	164	All liberal arts

These studies have tallied one or a combination of such variables as the relative magnitude of each academic discipline, enrollments, class size, number of colleges offering the various courses, faculty goals, programmatic patterns, student interests, and prevalence of remedial instruction and advanced courses. The findings of the CSCC studies have been reported in numerous papers, many summarized in *The Collegiate Function of Community Colleges* by Arthur M. Cohen and Florence B. Brawer, published by Jossey Bass in 1987. This paper reports the findings of the 1991 study.

METHOD

The data were obtained from 164 community colleges throughout the United States by randomly sampling the colleges listed in the 1990 *Directory of the American*

Association of Community and Junior Colleges. The sample was balanced according to size with 51 small (less than 1500 students), 56 medium, and 57 large (over 6000 students) colleges in the set. Because a special effort was made to include the colleges that were participating in the National Center for Academic Achievement and Transfer's partnership grant program, the sample was tilted somewhat toward colleges that enroll higher proportions of underrepresented minority-group students.

Catalogs and class schedules for spring, 1991, were obtained from the colleges and course sections in the liberal arts were counted and tallied according to the coding scheme used in the prior studies. The scheme divides the liberal arts curriculum into six major disciplines--humanities, English, fine and performing arts, social sciences, sciences, and mathematics and computer sciences. These six disciplines are further divided into fifty-five broad subject areas, and these are in turn divided in 245 sub-subject areas. For example, the sub-subject area "French" is part of the broad subject area "Foreign Languages," which is part of the "Humanities" discipline. For a course section to be listed, the class schedule had to designate a meeting time and place; laboratory, independent study, cooperative, apprenticeship, and field works classes were not included.

To code each liberal arts course at the appropriate level of proficiency, definitions for remedial, standard,

and advanced courses were used. "Remedial" applies to any compensatory, developmental, or basic course which is below college-level proficiency and which typically does not carry college transfer credit. "Standard" courses are "first-tier" or "introductory" courses which have no same subject-area prerequisite for enrollment and which carry college graduation or transfer credit. "Advanced" courses carry a prerequisite in the same or a related field as a condition for enrollment.

After coding and tallying 59,205 liberal arts classes into the appropriate sub-subject areas, a random sample of every tenth section under each broad subject area was pulled. The colleges were asked to provide either second-census or end-of-the term enrollment figures for this sample. The number of sections that had been cancelled in each subject area was also noted. Enrollment and average class size figure were then calculated, based on the 164 colleges, and extrapolated to the population of 1,250 U.S. community colleges. Finally, the scheduled course sections in the remainder of the curriculum were counted in order to determine an approximate ratio of liberal arts to non-liberal arts offerings.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study provided data on many aspects of the liberal arts curriculum and, together with the earlier CSCC studies, was used to plot trends in the various subject areas. Additional data that were available from a complementary

study of transfer rates in 52 of the 164 participating colleges, and IPEDS data on the ethnic composition of the student body in all the colleges made it possible to answer a number of questions:

How have the liberal arts changed in recent years?

What is the fastest growing subject area?

Does college size or locale relate to course patterns?

How does a college's liberal arts curriculum relate to its transfer rate?

Does the curriculum differ in colleges with higher or lower minority student enrollment?

How much does the curriculum reflect a college's graduation requirements?

HOW HAVE THE LIBERAL ARTS CHANGED IN RECENT YEARS?

In general, the liberal arts have expanded. In 1991 they accounted for around 56 percent of the curriculum, up from 52 percent in 1986. Very little of this expansion can be traced to innovation or new course designs; most resulted from higher proportions of the students enrolling in traditional liberal arts classes.

With few exceptions the liberal arts reveal remarkable stability. Many of the subject areas continue to be offered in nearly all (90 percent plus) of the colleges: History, Literature, Political Science, English, Economics, Psychology, Sociology, Biology, Chemistry, Math and Computer Science. Total enrollments in these subjects reflect their dominance (Table 1). However, the ubiquity of the offerings and the enrollment figures mask certain changes.

TABLE 1

TOTAL STUDENT ENROLLMENT (DUPLICATED HEAD COUNT) FOR ALL LIBERAL ARTS AREAS

HUMANITIES	
Art History/Appreciation	84,700
Cultural Anthropology	31,100
Foreign Languages	460,700
History	396,500
Interdisciplinary Humanities (includes Cultural Geography)	94,200
Literature	120,900
Fine & Performing Arts Hist./Appreciation	29,900
Music History/Appreciation	65,600
Philosophy and Logic	143,200
Political Science	249,000
Religious Studies	14,300
Social Ethnic Studies	13,400
ENGLISH	1,317,400
FINE AND PERFORMING ARTS	
Dance	27,600
Music	95,800
Theater	19,600
Visual Arts	151,700
SOCIAL SCIENCES	
Anthropology	28,000
Economics	173,500
Geography	19,500
Interdisciplinary Social Sciences	30,100
Psychology	455,100
Sociology	256,300
SCIENCES	
Biological Sciences(incl. Ag.Sci./Nat.Res.)	409,300
Chemistry	130,200
Earth & Space Sciences (includes Env. Sci.)	85,100
Engineering Sciences and Technology	102,200
Geology	24,100
Integrated Science	43,400
Physics	80,100
MATHEMATICS AND COMPUTER SCIENCES	
Introductory & Intermediate Mathematics	766,100
Advanced Mathematics	87,700
Applied Math/Technology-Related	41,600
Computer Science Technology	147,200
Math for Other Majors	99,700
Statistics and Probability	69,000

Foreign languages, detailed below in the section on ESL, are offered in less than 90 percent of the colleges but their enrollments, tripling between 1978 and 1991, are exceeded by only English and Math. In that same thirteen-year interval, enrollments in Psychology, Biology, Physics, Chemistry, and Math doubled but those in Literature, History, and Political Science changed hardly at all. Therefore, although some basic subjects continue to be offered nearly everywhere, the overall number of students taking them shifts markedly.

Other changes were seen in special-group and remedial studies. The CSCC staff coded such courses as Women's Literature, Afro-American History, and Sociology of Mexican Americans respectively in Group Literature (offered in more than half of the colleges), History of Special Groups (more than one-third of the colleges), and Sociology of Particular Groups (found in one-fourth of the colleges). Ethnic studies, coded only if it was listed as a separate course or program, was found in only 10 percent of the colleges. Thus the CSCC findings should not be compared with those reported by Levine and Cureton (1992) who tallied each special-group course as "Ethnic Studies" or "Women's Studies."

Remedial studies continue their prominence in English and Math (Table 2). Around 30 percent of the class sections offered in English are at the remedial level, down from 37 percent 15 years ago, and the percentage of Remedial Math classes dropped in half: from 32 to 16 percent. These

TABLE 2

PERCENT OF COLLEGES PROVIDING REMEDIAL, STANDARD, AND ADVANCED COURSES IN THE SIX MAJOR DISCIPLINE AREAS

DISCIPLINE	REMEDIAL	STANDARD	ADVANCED
Humanities	1%	97%	80%
English	89%	99%	84%
Fine & Performing Arts	0%	83%	75%
Social Science	0%	98%	59%
Science	5%	100%	87%
Math & Computer Science	65%	98%	86%

PERCENT OF REMEDIAL, STANDARD, AND ADVANCED COURSE OFFERINGS IN EACH MAJOR DISCIPLINE AREA

DISCIPLINE	REMEDIAL	STANDARD	ADVANCED
Humanities	.1%	82.5%	17.4%
English	30.5%	49.7%	19.8%
Fine & Performing Arts	0.0%	62.8%	37.2%
Social Science	0.0%	85.8%	14.2%
Science	1.0%	67.6%	31.7%
Math & Computer Science	15.9%*	62.2%	21.9%

*Self-paced, individualized, and lab courses were not counted. A large number of remedial math courses were self-paced, individualized, and lab courses which would explain the low remedial math percentage.

changes resulted not because the incoming students were better prepared but because Math labs have become much more widespread and the CSCC study did not count enrollments in lab courses. Furthermore, much of the remedial English instruction is taking place in tutorial settings and in courses coded as "College-level Introductory Composition" but which may be taken repeatedly; Florida's College Level Academic Skills Test requirement, for example, has stimulated much of the latter.

Intracourse shifts undoubtedly have been occurring as well. Certainly few, if any, instructors are teaching "U.S. History to 1877" in the same fashion as they were; the texts and syllabi have been modified to account for the contributions of women and minorities. But if the course carries the same title it is coded as the same course.

WHAT IS THE FASTEST GROWING SUBJECT AREA?

English as a Second Language is far and away the fastest growing area in community colleges. In fact, the phenomenal growth in Foreign Languages (from 5 percent of the entire liberal arts enrollment in 1986 to 8.5 percent in 1991) is due solely to the continuing rise in ESL. ESL represented 30 percent of the foreign language enrollments in 1983, 43 percent in 1986, and 53 percent in 1991 when there were 244,306 students enrolled. The percentage of colleges offering ESL grew from 26 in 1975 to 41 in 1991. Among the colleges offering ESL, 58 percent offered from 1 to 25 sections, 36 percent offered from 26 to 100 sections,

and the remaining 6 percent offered more than 100 sections. Some of the larger ones are listed below:

College	Number of ESL Sections Offered
Yuba College, Marysville, CA	70
Pasadena City College, CA	71
Community College of Philadelphia, PA	83
San Jose City College, CA	89
Miami-Dade Community College (So. Campus), FL	152
Passaic County Community College, Paterson, NJ	160
Harry S. Truman College, Chicago, IL	243
El Paso Community College, TX	429

ESL takes many forms. At El Paso Community College, programs in ESL and ESP (for advanced students) were available as well as Bilingual Education programs which offered instruction in content areas in Spanish. A sample of classes taught bilingually included Organizational Behavior, U.S. History since 1865, and Medical Terminology. Miami-Dade Community College separates acronyms for its ESL programs to clearly designate which courses may count toward graduation requirements (labelled ESL in the course catalog) and which do not (ENS--English for Non-Native Speakers label). Miami-Dade also maintains a Bilingual Institute for Business & Technology where students can learn technical terminology in both English and Spanish.

All the large colleges offer classes in English language instruction to both ESL and EFL students, that is, to both U.S. citizens and immigrants whose native language is not English as well as to foreign students. Passaic County Community College (New Jersey) maintains separate ESL programs for foreign students and for U.S. immigrants and

citizens. Most colleges with sizeable ESL populations offer special bilingual/ESL services to LEP students to help them succeed in regular coursework. Harry S. Truman College in Chicago offers ESL-TV for Spanish-speaking adults. Many large campuses maintain bilingual assistance centers for students whose native language is Spanish, but not many have established centers for students whose native language is other than Spanish.

ESL students from numerous language groups sometimes represent substantial proportions of the college's population, as they do at Passaic County Community College where 60 percent of the students take some form of ESL. At the Community College of Philadelphia, ESL students come from 56 different countries; 21 percent of the students are Vietnamese, 17 percent are Spanish, and 14 percent Russian. At Truman College 60 percent are Russian. The Gujarati-speaking population at Passaic is second only to the Spanish-speaking ESL population at the college. Thirty-six percent of Pasadena City's ESL students speak some dialect of Chinese as their first language. And at Yuba College, the Hmong students have only recently fallen behind Spanish-speaking ESL students as the largest language group.

With almost a quarter of a million students occupying seats in ESL classes in community colleges across the U.S., and with these numbers expected to increase, many policy implications loom. For example, since 60 percent of the ESL sections are offered for beginning or intermediate-level

students, the time it takes a student to complete a degree program will grow as more students spend more time studying English to prepare for entry to degree-credit classes. In just five years, ESL has jumped a full 70 percent of its share of the total liberal arts curriculum. Its impact on the overall instructional program has yet to be traced.

DOES COLLEGE SIZE OR LOCALE RELATE TO COURSE PATTERNS?

A perennial problem in comparing rural colleges with urban colleges, and small colleges with large colleges, is that few rural colleges are large and few urban colleges are small; therefore, any differences that appear may be related to size or to locale, or to both. The distribution of colleges in the CSCC sample points to the pattern: only three of the 46 small colleges were in urban settings and only two of the 58 large colleges were in rural areas.

Still, it is possible to make some comparisons. As noted in the table, college size is only modestly related to general curriculum patterns. With the exception of a tilt

TABLE 3

LIBERAL ARTS CURRICULUM BY SIZE OF INSTITUTION

Size of Institution	Percent of Liberal Arts Curriculum Which is					
	Eng.	Human.	Fine Arts	Soc.Sci	Sci	Math/CompSci
Small	22	21	10	12	18	18
Medium	23	22	08	13	14	21
Large	23	25	10	11	13	18

toward science in the smaller colleges and humanities in the larger ones (an effect of the numerous sections of ESL), rounding error may account for the small differences shown.

The curricular differences that may be attributed to college locale can be computed by viewing just the medium-size colleges. (Of the 59 institutions in that category, 15 were urban, 20 suburban, and 24 rural.) But as noted in Table 4 few differences appear except for the greater percentage of Humanities, again ESL-dominated, in the urban colleges. Thus, like college size, locale is not substantially related to the distribution of liberal arts courses across the curriculum.

TABLE 4

LIBERAL ARTS CURRICULUM IN MEDIUM-SIZED COLLEGES BY COLLEGE LOCALE

Size/Loc. of Inst..	Percent of Liberal Arts Curriculum Which is					
	Eng	Human	FineArts	Soc.Sci.	Sci	Math/CompSci
Med. Urban	23	25	08	12	14	19
Med. Suburban	22	21	09	12	13	23
Med. Rural	23	19	09	14	15	20
Full Sample	22	24	09	12	14	20

Does the availability of remedial or advanced courses vary? The curriculum in the medium-sized rural colleges includes a smaller percentage of remedial courses and a larger percentage of advanced courses. The rural institutions offer three sections of advanced courses for

every remedial section offered, while suburban institutions offer 1.9 and urban institutions offer 1.4 advanced sections for every remedial section. For the overall sample, the ratio is 2.2 advanced sections for each remedial section. These differences are more pronounced than those based on size, and suggest some real differences in the structure of the curriculum. As has been argued by Richardson and Bender (1987), urban institutions apparently *do* devote a greater proportion of their curriculum to remedial studies, and, consequently, a smaller proportion to advanced level courses.

The availability of specialized courses in certain disciplines varies even more markedly. The smaller institutions cannot offer as many total class sections as the medium and larger ones. What choices do they make? Table 5 displays the subject areas provided. The larger the college, the greater the likelihood of its offering courses other than the basic general studies requirements. From Art History to Statistics the ratio of colleges providing the specialized classes drops as college size decreases, with the most pronounced differences coming in Cultural Anthropology, Cultural Geography, Dance, Earth/Space Science, Fine Arts Appreciation, and Geology. Differences of this magnitude do not show up in comparing the medium-sized colleges on the basis of location.

In summary, the major liberal arts disciplines are evenly distributed across all community colleges regardless

TABLE 5
PERCENTAGE OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES OFFERING LIBERAL ARTS CLASSES BY INSTITUTIONAL SIZE

	Large	Medium	Small
Number of Colleges in Sample	58	59	47
Humanities			
Art History	91	88	57
Cultural Anthropology	83	37	15
Cultural Geography	40	24	06
Foreign Languages	98	88	70
History	98	92	83
Interdisc. Humanities	71	42	26
Literature	98	93	81
Fine & Perf. Arts Hist/App.	74	41	19
Music History/Appreciation	86	71	51
Philosophy	95	68	55
Political Science	98	86	83
Religious Studies	26	25	13
Social and Ethnic Studies	31	03	08
English	100	98	98
Fine and Performing Arts			
Dance	40	24	06
Music	90	73	42
Theater	60	51	26
Visual Arts	97	86	57
Social Sciences			
Anthropology	59	22	17
Economics	98	93	87
Geography	57	42	28
Hist./Sociology/Phil. of Sci.	07	05	02
Interdisc. Social Sciences	50	32	21
Psychology	100	98	96
Sociology	100	97	83
Sciences			
Agriculture and Natural Res.	19	17	17
Biological Sciences	100	97	85
Chemistry	100	97	79
Earth/Space Science	81	44	19
Engineering	97	80	45
Environmental Science	26	10	15
Geology	69	33	21
Integrated Sciences	62	41	34
Physics	98	86	74
Mathematics and Computer Sciences			
Introductory & Int. Math	100	98	96
Advanced Math	98	88	68
Applied Math	72	56	38
Computer Sciences	98	92	77
Math for other Majors	93	85	62
Statistics	98	83	50

of size or setting, suggesting that students seeking a general education can obtain the basic courses anywhere. Finding advanced courses and courses in specialized subject areas is a different matter. Students at large community colleges have a wide variety of subjects to choose from but students at smaller colleges and those in rural areas may find fewer choices.

ARE CURRICULUM AND TRANSFER RATES RELATED?

If, as conventional belief has it, the liberal arts are provided primarily for students expecting to transfer to baccalaureate-granting institutions, then that curricular area should be more prominent in the colleges with higher rates of student transfer. To test that proposition the CSCC staff matched the data from the curriculum study with the findings from a study of transfer rates that the CSCC was conducting simultaneously. The definition of transfer rate was: *The number of students who entered a community college in fall, 1986, with no prior college experience and who completed at least twelve college credit units there, divided into the number of that group who matriculated at a senior institution by spring, 1991.* Fifty-two colleges participated in both the curriculum and transfer studies. For comparison purposes ESL was removed from the liberal arts data set because it is not a typical transfer-related curriculum.

To test the relationship between the proportion of liberal arts courses in the total curriculum and transfer

rates the means for both the transfer rates and liberal arts ratios were derived and the colleges were placed into high and low categories. Colleges with transfer rates below the mean were placed in the low category and the colleges with transfer rates above the mean were placed in the high category. Similarly, colleges with liberal arts ratios at or above the mean were placed in the high category, those below were placed in the low category. These categories were crosstabulated. Findings were that among those colleges with transfer rates below the sample mean, 69 percent were also below the mean for the proportion of liberal arts offerings in the college. Among those colleges with transfer rate classified as high, 63 percent were high in liberal arts offerings. These were statistically significant relationships at the .05 level.

A second analysis compared the ratios of remedial, standard, and advanced courses with the college's transfer rates. No significant relationships were found. Thus, while proportion of liberal arts courses in the colleges appear to be related to transfer, these differences are less apparent when analyzed by course level.

DOES THE CURRICULUM DIFFER IN COLLEGES WITH HIGHER OR LOWER MINORITY STUDENT ENROLLMENT?

A perennial issue in the analysis of community colleges is the extent to which they assist or retard their students' progress toward the baccalaureate. Because most of the minority-group students who begin higher education do so in

a community college, and because the students who start there seem less likely than native university students to progress toward the baccalaureate expeditiously, numerous analysts have contended that the colleges' policies and procedures are detrimental to that progress; see, for example, Astin (1977) and Pincus and Archer (1989). The curriculum that the colleges provide is frequently criticized for its emphasis on vocational studies; Brint and Karabel (1989), and Grubb (1991), in particular cite that as a major contributor to the students' failure to gain higher degrees.

If these contentions have merit, then the curriculum in colleges with high proportions of non-white students should reflect a distinct bias away from the liberal arts. To test that proposition the CSCC staff classified the colleges in the sample according to percentage of non-whites and ratio of liberal arts courses offered and found that 58 percent of the colleges with non-white student percentages above the mean also had percentages of liberal arts courses above the mean. Furthermore, 67 percent of the colleges with lower percentages of non-whites were also below the mean in liberal arts classes. As for curriculum level the analyses found no significant relationships between the ethnic composition of a school and the percent of remedial, standard, and advanced courses in the liberal arts curriculum.

Based on these findings the contention that the colleges with high proportions of minorities tend to offer fewer liberal arts classes is not supported. In fact, the colleges with higher percentages of minorities offer *more* liberal arts courses. The ratio in a few colleges is startling. At Atlanta Metropolitan College (GA) 91 percent of the student population is non-white while 79 percent of the curriculum is devoted to liberal arts. At Borough of Manhattan Community College (NY) non-white students comprise 91 percent of the population and liberal arts courses 71 percent of the curriculum. In comparison, colleges which have smaller percentages of non-whites such as Williamsburg Technical College (SC)--36 percent, and Triton (IL)--28 percent, have percentages of liberal arts curriculums that fall below the mean. The ethnic minorities do have access to liberal arts curricula and college level courses.

Still, it appears that the larger the percent of non-white students, the *lower* the transfer rate. In the colleges with a low percentage of minority students, 57 percent had low transfer rates, while in the colleges with large numbers of minority students, 85 percent had low transfer rates. Therefore, while a higher concentration of minority students at community colleges is related to more liberal arts course offerings, it is also associated with a lower transfer rate. Whatever the reasons, they should not be attributed to the curriculum. Vocational-course tracking cannot be blamed.

ARE GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS RELATED TO ENROLLMENTS IN THE LIBERAL ARTS COURSES?

The community colleges of America enroll 5.1 million students and award 450,000 associate degrees each year. Clearly most of the students leave without completing the degree requirements. Some obtain occupational certificates, many transfer to other institutions, and many more follow other pursuits for a while, displaying the intermittent attendance pattern that Adelman (1992) so well documents.

Even so, how much do the graduation requirements relate to the course enrollments? To test this question the catalogs for 40 colleges in the sample were reviewed to determine curriculum requirements for the associate degree. Some slight differences were found among requirements for the various types of associate degrees (Arts, Science, Applied Science, etc.), but for the most part the basic course patterns were similar. The percentage of community colleges requiring specific subject areas is shown in Table 6 along with the number of students taking classes in those areas.

Except for Ethnic Studies and its manifestation in courses in the history, sociology, and literature of special groups (offered in less than half the colleges), all the disciplines required for graduation are present in practically all the colleges. No surprise, because these often-called general education courses have represented the curricular canon from secondary schools through the lower

division of the universities since early in the century. Computer Literacy, a subject area that has grown rapidly in the past 20 years, and the even more recent Ethnic Studies,

TABLE 6

	Colleges Requiring One or More Courses for Graduation	Number of Students Enrolled Nationally
English Composition	97%	1,317,400
Math	97%	1,064,100
Humanities (excluding ESL)	88%	704,800
Social Studies	98%	
US History	34%	396,500
US Government	26%	249,000
Science	94%	768,400
Physical Education/Health	74%	N/A
Ethnic Studies (separately organized programs only)	8%	13,400
Computer Literacy	11%	147,200

are the only contemporary additions. They are required in 11 percent and 8 percent of the colleges respectively and their

relatively low enrollment figures reflect this lack of ubiquity.

SUMMARY

This paper has reported the findings of the most recent of a series of studies of the liberal arts curriculum in American community colleges. Findings were that overall, the liberal arts have expanded from 52 percent of the total curriculum in 1986 to 56 percent in 1991. This probably resulted less from the introduction of new courses or course requirements than from an increase in the proportion of students seeking the first two years of baccalaureate study. The enrollment figures show the continued dominance of the traditional general education courses: English Composition, Introductory Math, Psychology, History, and Political Science. The most notable shift in the curriculum was in Foreign Languages where, fueled by a notable jump in ESL enrollments and in the number of colleges offering ESL, the Foreign Languages share rose from 5 to 8.5 percent of the entire set of liberal arts classes.

Relationships between the liberal arts curriculum and college size, location, minority student enrollment, transfer rate, and graduation requirements were analyzed. Colleges in urban areas were found to offer higher percentages of remedial courses, thus confirming a generally accepted notion. College size related to course patterns only in the provision of specialized classes: the larger the college, the more likely that a class in, for example,

Dance or Cultural Geography would be found. (A similar relationship appeared in the earlier studies.) A community college must have quite a large student body before it has the enrollment sufficient to support specialized classes in many fields.

The finding that a college's transfer rate is positively related to the percentage of liberal arts courses that it offers was no surprise; the liberal arts are basic to traditional baccalaureate studies. But there was no relation between the percentage of *advanced* courses offered and the college's transfer rate. One explanation may be that as the CSCC found in a parallel study of transfer rates, the median student transfers after having completed around thirty units. Thus, half the transferring students do not stay at the community college long enough to enroll in advanced or sophomore-level courses.

The finding that the ratio of liberal arts curriculum is greater in the colleges that are *above* the mean in percentage of minority students enrolled refutes the widely held contention that the minorities are tracked into vocational programs; that is, unless those programs are requiring their matriculants to take large numbers of liberal arts classes, nearly all of which carry university-transfer credit. The lack of a significant relationship between a college's minority student ratio and the percentage of its curriculum that was devoted to remedial, introductory, or advanced courses also suggests that the

reasons for the minority students' lower transfer rate cannot be attributed to the curriculums that the colleges provide.

REFERENCES

Adelman, C. *The Way We Are: The Community College as American Thermometer*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, February 1992.

Astin, A. *Four Critical Years*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc., 1977.

Brint, S. & Karabel, J. *The Diverted Dream: Community Colleges and the Promise of Educational Opportunity in America, 1900-1985*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1989.

Cohen, A. M. & Brawer, F. B. *The Collegiate Function of Community Colleges*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc., 1987.

Cohen, A. M. & Brawer, F. B. *The American Community College* (2nd Edition). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc., 1989.

Grubb, N. "The Decline of Community College Transfer Rates: Evidence from National Longitudinal Surveys." *Journal of Higher Education*, Vol. 62, No. 2, March/April 1991, 194-222.

Levine, A. & Cureton, J. "The Quiet Revolution: Eleven Facts About Multiculturalism and the Curriculum." *Change*, Vol. 24, No. 1, January/February 1992, 25-29.

Pincus, F. & Archer, E. *Bridges to Opportunity: Are Community Colleges Meeting the Needs of Minority Students?* New York: Academy for Educational

Development and College Entrance Examination Board, 1989.

Richardson, R. & Bender, L. *Students in Urban Settings: Achieving the Baccalaureate Degree*. Washington, D.C.: Association for the Study of Higher Education, 1985.

ERIC Clearinghouse for Junior Colleges

JUL 10 1992